

Claims

What is claimed is:

1. A method of controlling access to data,
comprising:

5 in response to a request from a requestor for
access to data stored in an encoded form on a
first data processing apparatus, sending a request
from a decoding controller on the first data
10 processing apparatus to a second data processing
apparatus to determine attributes of a decoding
process for accessing the encoded data;

 in response to said request to the second
data processing apparatus, receiving said
determined attributes at said decoding controller;

15 performing the decoding process in accordance
with the determined attributes.

2. A method according to claim 1, wherein the
requestor communicates via an application programming
interface with a data access manager which includes the
20 decoding controller, the application programming interface
being predefined such that the decoding controller and any
received decoding attributes are shielded from the
requestor.

3. A method according to claim 1, wherein received attributes are stored in volatile memory of the first data processing apparatus when received, and are deleted from said memory at the end of a current requestor session, such
5 that a request to determine attributes of a decoding process must be repeated for each requestor session for which access to encoded data is required.

4. A method according to claim 1, wherein the determined attributes of a decoding process include
10 identifiers of one or more of: a cryptor used in encryption and required for decryption; a compressor used in compression and required for decompression; and an authenticator for requestor authentication.

5. A method according to claim 4, including the
15 steps, subsequent to receiving said determined attributes, of:

checking whether program code implementing said identified cryptor, compressor and authenticator is stored on the first data
20 processing apparatus; and, if not, initiating downloading of the respective program code from the second data processing apparatus or another data processing apparatus.

6. A method according to claim 1, wherein the determined attributes of a decoding process include program
25 code implementing the decoding process.

7. A method according to claim 1, wherein the attributes of a decoding process include one or more decoding keys for use in decryption or authentication.

5 8. A method according to claim 1, including logging at the second data processing apparatus said requests to determine attributes.

10 9. A method according to claim 1, including authenticating the requestor to the second data processing apparatus before determining the attributes of the decoding process.

10. A computer program product comprising
machine-readable recording medium having recorded thereon
computer program code implementing functions for controlling
the operation of a data processing apparatus on which the
5 program code runs to perform the following steps of a method
for controlling access to encoded data:

10 in response to a request from a requestor for
access to data stored in an encoded form on a
first data processing apparatus, sending a request
from a decoding controller on the first data
processing apparatus to a second data processing
apparatus to determine attributes of a decoding
process for accessing the encoded data;

15 in response to said request to the second
data processing apparatus, receiving said
determined attributes at said decoding controller;

performing the decoding process in accordance
with the determined attributes.

11. A first data processing apparatus including:

a processing unit;

data storage means;

5 communication means for sending and receiving
communications from data processing systems
connectable to said first data processing
apparatus via a network; and

10 a decoding controller, responsive to a
request from a requestor for access to data stored
in an encoded form in said data storage means, for
sending a request via said communication means to
a second data processing apparatus to determine
attributes of a decoding process for accessing the
15 encoded data and for receiving said determined
attributes via said communication means;

20 wherein the decoding controller is adapted to
control the operation of the processing unit to
perform the decoding process in accordance with
the determined attributes.

